

# CPCO Conference 2006 Hosted by York Catholic Principals and Vice-principals

By Carole Clune, Editor, *Principal Connections*

## We gather to learn, celebrate and dialogue...

**ON** April 27, 2006, York CDSB's Director of Education, Susan LaRosa, welcomed over 400 participants to the 2006 CPCO Annual Conference at the Hilton Suites in Markham Ontario. A keynote speaker that evening she emphasized the challenges to Catholic education and reminded participants that, as Catholic educators, "We are about building the kingdom of God." Principals must be servant leaders, she said, and facilitators of solutions.

She offered several tips for making the role of the principal fulfilling and personally rewarding. The face of administration has changed, she noted, and now requires a culture of collaborative learning in every school. This is a new path, an invitation to "become" through the learning community.

Recognizing fully the stresses, strains and challenges of the role of the principal, Susan LaRosa had some suggestions. "My attitude is the most important choice I will make each day," she said, and reminded the audience that failure is one of life's best teachers if we learn from our mistakes.



A sense of humour is essential. "Don't leave home without it," she tells us. She also called for flexibility of approach. "Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be bent out of shape." This positive approach was evident in her definition of conflict as an experience, not a disaster.

Susan LaRosa encouraged everyone to live every day to the fullest and to err on the side of compassion. "Put people first, second and third," she said. She encouraged

principals to see the 3Rs as "relationship, relationship, relationship" – with God, family and colleagues. As Catholic educators, "We have always been about community."

## Don't forget to dance!

David Wells, Director of Education in the Plymouth Diocese, was a well-received keynote speaker with an important message for principals. His address was one of the highlights of the conference.

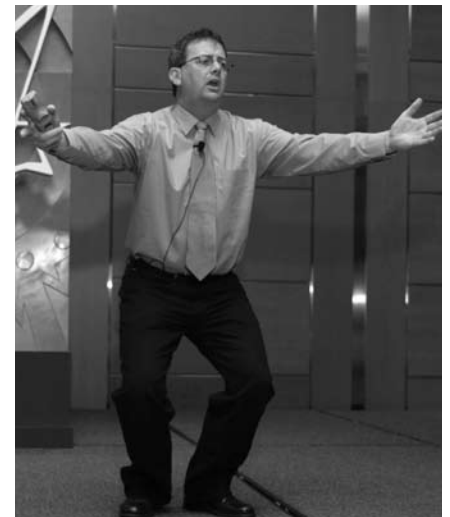
Wells was inspirational as he elaborated on his three contemporary "be-attitudes" for Christian leaders. The first was a challenge to principals to evaluate by vision rather than comparison. Success must be determined carefully and not be based on comparison but on fact.

The second be-attitude was to "Remember your Calling." He asked participants to recall the excitement and enthusiasm they experienced the first time they stepped into their offices as new principals. He reminded them that "You did not get your job by accident. Part of your faith is your calling." Principals should not lose sight of this, in spite of the day-to-day challenges of the job. He also reminded principals of their highest calling: "You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last..." Jn. 15:16-17.

The final be-attitude was "Stay awake! Watch the time!" We must never lose sight of what is really important in Catholic education, the passing of the Faith to our students. "Let go of the clutter," he reminded his audience, and concentrate on what is truly important. "Your biggest threat (to Catholic education) is not chaos but falling asleep!"

People can become lost in cynicism; often the urgent agenda can damage the important one. Growth takes time and sometimes educators don't always see the fruits of their labours. But Wells says that educators don't know when the growth takes place in their students, their staffs and themselves. He encourages principals to be confident enough to give their best and leave the rest to God.

With humour and exuberance, David Wells called Catholic principals to look to their roots, both spiritually and professionally, and to experience the joy of living fully. He reminded his audience, "Don't forget to dance!"



## We worship together...

On Friday, April 28, 2006, 400 CPCO conference participants attended a mass concelebrated by His Eminence, Cardinal Aloysius Ambrozic, and His Grace, Bishop Robert Harris, at St. Justin Martyr Catholic Church in Markham. Many parishioners also attended. The theme of multiculturalism was emphasized by the gift bearers in colourful national costumes.



In his homily, Cardinal Ambrozic reminded participants of the importance of the sacramental church and warned against the temptation of using religion for "our own selfish ends."

Bishop Robert Harris is the liaison person between the Ontario Catholic bishops and CPCO. He takes this role seriously and was an active participant in all conference activities where he enjoyed dialoguing with conference participants.

## We learn together...

Conference participants enjoyed a wide variety of workshops organized with great care by the program committee and presented by highly qualified speakers. Presentations included information on alternative learning strategies, EQAO and student learning for elementary and secondary students, improvement of literacy, the role of the principal in investigations and hearings, liability and risk management, and servant leadership.

## We support...

It has become a tradition at CPCO conferences to provide participants with the opportunity to purchase passports for a nominal fee. These passports, when stamped by the vendors, were entered into a draw for valuable prizes donated by the vendors. The proceeds went to two worthy causes: I-Read-ABC and Rose of Sharon. I-Read-ABC was founded by three Canadian educators, two of whom are principals in York CDSB. This organization works with partners in Africa and Canada to provide literacy support and training for African deaf and blind children. Rose of Sharon is an organization that provides services for young mothers in York Region.



CPCO appreciates the generosity not only of the conference participants but of the large numbers of vendors who contributed prizes.

## And the award goes to...

The culmination of the 2006 CPCO conference was the Gala Awards Dinner held on April 28, 2006. A number of outstanding educators were honoured.

This year the **Father John Redmond Award** was presented not to an individual but to representatives of the Ontario Catholic Schools Trustees' Association in recognition of OCSTA's strong support of CPCO, especially during the early years of CPCO.



The recipient of the **Distinguished Service Award** was Jim Byrne, recently retired principal of the Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board. Jim was the first president of CPCO as an independent organization and is known as a man of vision and indomitable spirit. He was recognized for his exceptional leadership and outstanding contributions over the years.



Patrick Murray was honoured with the **Past-President's Award**. Patrick began his work with CPCO in May of 1998 when he was appointed to the Economic Security Committee (currently Member Security). He served as chair of this committee for two years until he was elected to the Executive Council where he is completing his seventh year.

During his tenure as president (2004-2005) Patrick worked on a number of Ministry of Education committees, and with many education partners. He served as chair for the Institute for Catholic Education and represented CPCO for two years as a member of the Board of Directors for the Canadian Association of Principals.

Each year a number of fine educators are recognized by CPCO as **Principal of the Year**. This year's recipients of the 2006 Principal of the Year Award are:



Ellen Walters,  
York CDSB (elementary)



Toni Pinelli,  
York CDSB (secondary)



Susan Conway Williamson,  
Algonquin & Lakeshore CDSB



Patricia Morley,  
Bruce-Grey CDSB



Claire Lamarre-Goyer,  
Northeastern CDSB



Gretchen Schuler,  
Toronto CDSB (elementary)

### Behind the scenes...

CPCO would like to acknowledge the efforts of the 2006 Conference Committee under the leadership of conference co-chairs Gabriella Mastrodicasa and Paul Devlin. This committee worked diligently for more than a year with CPCO office staff to provide a successful conference for our members.

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